

*In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb.*

St Luke 1:39-43

The relationship between Elizabeth and Mary and between their sons is one which has long fascinated artists. There are quite a few pictures of the two boys playing together, as their mothers look on - sometimes St Anne, whom tradition names as the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is there too. Those tranquil domestic scenes imagined by artists have their origin in this incident in the early lives of St John the Baptist and Jesus: their mothers meet and the baby John leaps for joy, acknowledging Jesus' supremacy. Jesus is the Lord, John is the herald.

It is good to remember the families of St John the Baptist and Jesus as they meet: though much lies ahead for their babies, in that innocent moment they are surrounded by love. As we remember them we may remember our own family too. Perhaps you are not able to gather this Christmas in the large group you are used to; perhaps you are feeling sad that there are family members you can't see; or perhaps your experience of family life is difficult, with memories of hurt or failure. As God to help you with those feelings and to allow you to share something of the warmth, joy and love of Elizabeth and Mary.